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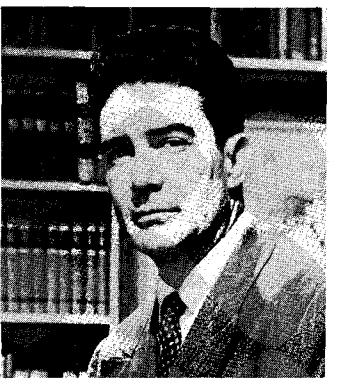

DAN SMOOT

SONIC BOOMS AND BOOSTERS

The Kennedy administration initiated, and President Johnson presses, a tax-financed program to develop a supersonic transport plane, for commercial use by private airlines — a plane to carry more than 200 passengers 1800 miles an hour or faster (two or three times the speed of sound), at an altitude of 65,000 feet or higher.[1]

At such altitudes, the supersonic plane will be practically out of earth's atmosphere. Too much cabin pressure can cause it to explode. Too little pressure will also be fatal to all aboard: brain cells will quit working; blood will boil; vital body fluids will vaporize — all in a matter of seconds. Oxygen masks and other equipment now known will do no good.[1]

At extreme altitudes, solar flares (explosions on the sun's surface) are a hazard to human life. A solar flare saturates upper earth atmosphere with energy particles which imbed themselves in the human body. Exposure for a few minutes to such irradiation will kill. Briefer exposure can cause decomposition of body cells (brain, blood, bone, tissue); sterilize men; cause women to miscarry; kill or deform unborn babies. Long-range effect on genetics is unknown.[1]

Below 50,000 feet, the earth's atmosphere insulates human beings against irradiation from solar flares. Artificial shielding for commercial planes above the atmosphere is impractical. Plans for a supersonic transport rest on hope that warning of solar flares can be given in time for pilots to dive planes into the protection of earth's atmosphere.[1] Multiple possibilities of human error and mechanical failure in this connection are terrifying to contemplate.

When a plane reaches a speed faster than the speed of sound, it breaks the sound barrier, producing noise and shock-waves called sonic boom. A sonic boom is heard and felt with greatest intensity at one moment and at one point on earth; but the boom does not vanish then and there. A supersonic plane drags a boom behind it, affecting a surface area up to 50 miles wide. Thus, a big supersonic plane, traveling 2000 miles, can cut a swathe 2000 miles long, 50 miles wide — exposing all property and every living creature in that one-hundred-thousand-square-mile area to

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the nerve-wracking noise and other harmful effects of sonic boom. Government experts concede that regular commercial flights by supersonic jets, night and day, will affect property and life in the United States, continuously.[1]

Supersonic flights on trans-continental or globe-circling trips will save flying time for travelers, but will create health hazards that medical science is only dimly aware of. Metabolism (chemical changes, in living cells, necessary in vital body processes) is geared to the rising and setting of the sun. What happens to this delicate clock-machine inside the body of a person who leaves London *at* 8:00 a.m. and arrives in Hawaii *before* 8:00 a.m.? Medical science does not know. A healthy person may notice no ill effect, though it may take his body a week to readjust its own metabolism after such a flight. No one knows whether lasting, subtle damage will occur. People already ill because of faulty metabolism may suffer serious consequences immediately.[1]

K. O. Lundberg, head of Sweden's aeronautical research institute, is much opposed to development of supersonic aircraft for commercial purposes. He says:

"The safety of the SST [supersonic transport] cannot be predicted, but it's likely to prove greatly inferior to that of subsonic aircraft. The SST will expose hundreds of millions of people on the ground to sonic boom, and passengers and crews to a potential cosmic radiation danger. It will offer inferior comfort, long rides to distant airports, and it appears likely to be grossly uneconomic."[1]

Robert S. McNamara (Secretary of Defense) has repeatedly stressed the fact that military services have no need for a faster-than-sound transport plane. Development of such a plane has nothing to do with national defense.[2] Why, then, is government illegally — unconstitutionally — spending tax money to develop a plane for private industry to use? Merely to haul tourists, businessmen, and other travelers faster than sound? No! Speed of travel is not really the objective. Airports for supersonic planes will necessarily be so far out in the country that travel time saved in the air will be spent on the ground getting to and from airports (except on extremely long flights).

Economic arguments are commonly used to justify governmental intervention in the development of a supersonic transport for private use. Official studies estimate that development of a supersonic transport will create up to 60,000 new jobs in airframe and engine-manufacturing firms; generate billion-dollar spending by U. S. airlines; stimulate foreign buying of American equipment and travel service.[2]

The economic picture is, however, confused. British and French governments are spending at least 450 million tax dollars to build one production model of a supersonic transport, to be called the *Concorde*. Experts generally agree that even if all development costs are ignored, the *Concorde* cannot be produced and operated economically — that it will always operate, at a loss, under government subsidy.[2]

Initially, the Federal Aviation Agency (in charge of the supersonic transport development program) estimated that developing a model, suitable for supersonic transportation in the United States, would cost one billion dollars. Now, the estimate is two billion dollars.[1] No major governmental official has indicated who will pay this cost. Will the American aviation industry be nationalized (that is, *socialized,* as in England, France, the Soviet Union) in order to produce a supersonic transport; or, will the industry itself pay for development and production? Government officials have not revealed their plans in this regard.

Officialdom has not yet tried to come to grips with the problem of financing supersonic transport development, because the *major* consideration is neither necessity, practicality, nor economics: it is *national image.*

All other nations have profited from our industrial, technological, and scientific developments. Why can we not be permitted to profit from foreign development? Since the supersonic transport has nothing to do with national defense (or

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any other pressing national need), why not let foreigners spend the billions necessary for research and development? If they can produce a plane that is safe, that is commercially practical, and that can be operated without hazard to the health, property, and happiness of the general population, American firms can buy one of the things and adapt it.

All the talk about how a supersonic transport development program will create new jobs, ease the balance-of-payments crisis, stimulate the economy, and help maintain American leadership in aviation, drums up unthinking support for the program, but does not reveal the real drive behind it — the insensate preoccupation with national image. While President Johnson strives to create a poverty image for the nation, he fears that our image will suffer if we do not spend billions to create a supersonic transport plane before others do.

Incidents already on record reflect this official concern about national image. In January, 1961, President Kennedy, just inaugurated, noticed that jet planes available for the White House—though safe and adequate — were not as fast and long-range as some planes used by commercial airlines, or as some which Khrushchev boasted he could commandeer. The White House immediately ordered several long-range 707 Jets from Boeing, so that White House air travelers would be seen in nothing but the best.[2]

Oklahoma City Guinea Pigs

Despite the illegality of federal spending in this field; despite the impracticability and the hazards, President Johnson expresses determination to press the supersonic transport development program to completion. Federal agencies are already busy spending 91 million dollars appropriated by Congress for initial studies.[1]

The most notable study is under way in Oklahoma City, where sonic boom tests are being made to *see how much the people can stand.* The people were not asked whether they were willing to be used as guinea pigs. Most residents of the City did not know that a test program was planned, until January 13, 1964 — when Gordon Bain (deputy administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency, in charge of supersonic transport development) announced that sonic boom tests in Oklahoma City would be cancelled immediately if there was *any* adverse public reaction, or *any* damage to structures.[4]

That was a curious announcement, because the federal government already had abundant evidence that sonic booms adversely affect human beings and do great damage to property. Since 1956, the Air Force has conducted several war games with supersonic planes over our cities. Statistics (compiled and released by the Air Force) reveal that, *through 1961,* there had been 3,389 claims for property damage caused by sonic booms; 1,539 of the claims had been approved and paid (the total amount of damage recognized and paid for by government being $159,000).[5]

Prior to the Oklahoma City project, sonic booms were a by-product of military maneuvers; and no city was subjected to prolonged bombardment.

The Federal Aviation Agency is in charge of sonic-boom testing in Oklahoma City. The Agency orders eight flights a day over the City (seven days a week, beginning each morning at 7:30) by Air Force supersonic jets (F-104 Starfighters). The Federal Aviation Agency rented and equipped (with more than $100,000 worth of electronic devices) four test houses for the study of shock-wave intensity and resulting damage.[6]

The program began on February 3, 1964, scheduled to continue six months (until August 3, 1964). Why so long a period? One sonic boom will shake walls and rattle windows, and cause the human nervous system to jerk in startled shock — perhaps without doing any lasting damage. Possibly *eight* such shocks in one day — or eight repeated for several days — may not do perceptible damage; but the same overpressure which rattles

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a window for a while may eventually shatter it. Sudden noise which galvanizes the human nervous system into momentary shock may, if repeated, cause deterioriation and lasting damage. When will fatigue from repeated shocks, in human nerves and building materials, set in? This, apparently, is what the Federal Aviation Agency is trying to find out in Oklahoma City.

By February 7, 1964 (the fourth day of testing), Oklahoma City newspapers had reported at least 40 claims for damage; but aggrieved citizens soon learned that government promises to stop testing, if any adverse reaction or property damage occurred, were equivocal. Sonic booms split sheetrock ceilings in the garage apartment of Dr. Charles Webber (Southwest Radio Church of the Air). An FAA representative looked at Dr. Webber's apartment and asserted that sonic booms did not cause the damage—suggesting that weather, inferior material, or faulty installation could have been the cause. Dr. Webber had lived there more than five years, and no sheetrock had ever split before. The FAA man repeated the FAA standard policy statement, that "sonic booms cannot cause damage to structures"—and then added, for Dr. Webber's edification, that the boom test nuisance is like war: the unlucky few who are hurt must put up with it, because the over-all activity is necessary to the long-range interests of the majority. The FAA man admitted the government was using Oklahoma City residents as guinea pigs.

Mrs. Victor H. Noftsger, a widow, has a home at 1626 N.W. 38th Street, built by her late husband who was a home builder. The house stands on a concrete slab which trembles with each boom, rocking the house, sometimes violently enough to make occupants dizzy. Aluminum siding has been blown off the outside of her home; her concrete patio has cracked; bathroom and lighting fixtures have exploded; wood-paneling and sheetrock walls have split; rafters and studdings have been wrenched out of place; portions of her roof have blown loose. She estimates her damage to date at more than $3000.00, but has not filed formal claim, because new damage occurs every day. Moreover, before she can file formal claim for such major damage she must get two estimates from disinterested builders or engineers. Each estimate costs about $25.00. While telling Mrs. Noftsger that sonic booms did not damage her house, because "sonic booms cannot cause damage to structures," FAA experts advised her that sonic booms would do "less damage" if she would keep all north doors and windows open during supersonic flights (regardless of weather). One FAA man suggested that Mrs. Noftsger sell her home and move, since nothing else could be done about her case.

Sonic booms are literally shaking to pieces the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Tollie Mashburn; but they get denial of responsibility from officials.

Citizens have tried in vain to get relief in the courts, and, generally, cannot even collect insurance for sonic-boom damage—because the federal government attributes the damage to faulty materials, to inferior construction, or to some other cause not covered in insurance policies.

There have been many cases of major damage, thousands involving minor damage. Many allege damage to their health (which seems plausible). There have been at least two cases, reported in Oklahoma City newspapers, of personal injury caused by sonic booms: an elderly lady got a three-inch cut on the head when plaster fell in her bedroom; a student at Capitol Hill high school was hit, while in class, by falling plaster and by fragments of a shattered light fixture.[7]

Before it was a month old, the sonic boom testing program had created turmoil in Oklahoma City. On February 25, 1964, seven residents complained to the Oklahoma City city council. The Council formally resolved to ask the Federal Aviation Agency to stop the tests.[8] The next day, representatives of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, and of an organization called "Citizens for Progress," called on the City Council—supporting sonic boom tests, saying the program would enable Oklahoma City to get the first supersonic airport and to become the supersonic

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transport center of the nation. The City Council asked for a show of hands in the audience. About 20 persons signified they wanted the tests to stop. A majority of those present (many of them wearing "SST" buttons) signified they were in favor of the tests. The City Council, though not in formal session, decided, in effect, to reverse the action taken the day before in formal session—decided *not* to ask FAA to stop testing.[9, 10]

Following these City Council sessions, residents throughout Oklahoma City circulated petitions and made telephone calls urging continuation of the boom tests. Feeling ran high. Many persons who refused to sign petitions supporting the tests were subjected to ridicule and abuse.

An FAA spokesman said (February 26, 1964) that statistics did "not indicate any damage structurally or physically" and that the tests would continue, unless the City Council requested otherwise. He gave the City a veiled warning, saying that "civic leaders" of Wichita, Kansas, wanted the tests moved there.[10]

Henry Bellmon (Republican Governor of Oklahoma) said the "small annoyance" suffered by residents of Oklahoma City was a small price to pay for benefits which aviation had brought to the City, and would bring in the future. The Stockyard City Lion's Club passed a resolution asserting that residents of Oklahoma City are willing to accept *any* hardship to support progress in aviation.[10]

Chamber of Commerce spokesmen (claiming that the sudden support for sonic boom testing was an unprompted "groundswell" of public sentiment) have denied that the Chamber actually encouraged any of the petition-signing or telephone-calling in support of tests.[4] There are strong indications to the contrary, however.

Shortly after the City Council meetings on February 25 and 26, the *Oklahoma City Times* sponsored a two-hour panel discussion by seven men: four government officials connected with the testing program; a representative from the Chamber of Commerce; a representative of citizens who live beneath the flight path of supersonic planes; and a moderator representing the newspaper.

Robert Varga represented the citizenry. Recalling promises that tests would be stopped if they became intolerable, Mr. Varga asked for a definition of *intolerable.* Lt. Col. David Lillard (assigned by the Air Force to the Federal Aviation Agency as an operational specialist, serving in Oklahoma City as assistant manager of the sonic boom testing program) said the booms would be considered intolerable when a majority of the 750,000 residents of the Oklahoma City area said they were. He said the tests would be stopped if a formal request came from some official body representing a majority of all residents. Colonel Lillard specified the city council, the governor, and the *chamber of commerce* as being official bodies whose request to end the boom tests would be honored. He said fewer than 1% of the total population had made complaints. He considered the silence of the majority proof of general approval.[4]

Mr. Varga asked how the general population was expected to register disapproval of the sonic boom tests. Mark Weaver (public affairs officer for the Federal Aviation Agency) said the people were expected to make complaining telephone calls. Mr. Varga replied that he had had considerable trouble finding the telephone number to call when he wanted to register a reaction to the booms, and asked why the telephone number was kept a secret. Mr. Weaver said he thought the telephone number (JA 5-6507, which people are supposed to call if they dislike the booms) had been published in the papers once or twice.[4]

Mr. Varga asked how much property damage must be done for officials to classify the sonic booms *intolerable.* Jack Huntress (Federal Aviation Agency engineer) said:

"Any time you . . . actually start doing physical damage it would be an intolerable situation."[4]

Paul Strasbaugh (executive secretary of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce) said Ok-

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lahoma City residents support the boom tests because they are proud of the City's image as a leading aviation center; because they know the City will benefit by further progress in aviation; and because the tests are in the interest of progress. Mr. Strasbaugh laid heavy emphasis on the number of government aviation facilities in the area and on the presence there of a big new General Electric facility doing "aerospace" work. He strongly hinted that if Oklahoma City did not cooperate enthusiastically with the federal government's sonic boom test program there might be retaliation against the City by the federal government and by private firms—retaliation by moving important facilities elsewhere, and by refusal to bring in new plants and installations.[4]

Najeeb Halaby (Administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency) visited Oklahoma City on February 27 to speak at a civic club dinner. The Chamber of Commerce received an anonymous telephone threat against Mr. Halaby, because of the sonic booms. A Chamber of Commerce spokesman arranged a police bodyguard for Mr. Halaby, first saying the bodyguard was necessary because of the threat, but then saying it was arranged because the Chamber of Commerce feared that persons opposed to the boom tests might picket the meeting where Mr. Halaby spoke. Mr. Halaby repeated the standard promise of the FFA: that if Oklahoma City found the tests intolerable, the national government would also consider them intolerable and stop them.[11]

On April 29, 1964, the Federal Aviation Agency revealed that its four test houses had suffered structural damage. Though admitting that government experts did not know what caused the damage, FFA spokesmen asserted that sonic booms were not responsible, reiterating, as absolute fact, that "sonic booms cannot cause damage to structures." The next day, however (April 30, 1964), the Federal Aviation Agency reported on the amount of damage *that had been officially attributed to sonic booms.* The FFA revealed that, by April 30 (after slightly less than three months of boom testing), 4774 persons had reported property damage; 2396 had filed formal claims; 865 of the formal claims had been processed; 740 of the processed claims had been rejected as invalid; 125 had been paid (total payment for the 125 claims: $6875).[12]

The Federal Aviation Agency ordered a survey-by-interview in Oklahoma City to determine reaction to sonic booms. One lady (an experienced interviewer), who was hired for the survey, quit after a few days and reported her observations to me. She said interviewer-trainees were first assured that sonic booms do no more damage than a thunderstorm. Since the booms had already cracked the walls and ceilings of her home, she concluded that the lecture was intended to let interviewers know what reactions they were expected to get. She noted that the 18-page questionnaire contained 42 questions, generally slanted to evoke answers favorable to the testing program; that most interviews were scheduled for areas where booms are least noticeable; that answers, coded for IBM machines, did not coincide with "added comments" made by persons interviewed.

On May 12, 1964, a group of Oklahoma City residents filed action in state court and got a restraining order which stopped sonic boom tests one day.[13] The Federal Aviation Agency got a writ from federal judge Stephen Chandler, setting aside the state court's restraining order. Judge Chandler scheduled a hearing for May 21. On that day, Judge Chandler ruled against the plaintiffs, scolding them for trying to stop the boom test program. The judge said that citizens of Oklahoma City are somewhat like military draftees — that boom tests are necessary not only to determine the feasibility of supersonic commercial air-

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craft, but also for the defense of the United States against foreign nations.[14] It is interesting to note, again, at this point: Secretary of Defense McNamara has often been quoted (in Oklahoma City newspapers and elsewhere) as saying, emphatically, that the military has no need for a supersonic transport. Development of such a plane has nothing to do with national defense.[2]

What To Do

Bureaucratic, chamber-of-commerce boosterism has reached the ultimate in Oklahoma City. Inalienable property rights; the integrity of governmental pledges to citizens; the serenity of human life; the social harmony of a great city — all must be sacrificed on the altar of "progress" and "image." Material benefits promised by sonic-boom boosters and SST enthusiasts are extremely doubtful of fulfillment; but if all were fully realized, and compounded a thousand times, they would hardly bring to the general population of Oklahoma City as much happiness as sonic-boom testing has already caused in misery and turmoil.

Subjecting an American city to sonic-boom tests, just to find out what will happen, is almost as unprincipled and tyrannical as subjecting it to actual hydrogen-bomb, or nerve-gas, attack to see who and what will survive. If the necessity of national defense required sonic-boom testing, the government should build a model town on the desert and populate it with people willing to hire out as guinea pigs. That would cost more than the Oklahoma City testing costs; but, by stopping the squandering of tax billions on foreign aid and foreign wars and other unconstitutional activities harmful to the nation, government could save enough to spend any amount needed on genuine national defense.

Since defense does not require development of a supersonic transport, the federal government has no constitutional authority to do anything in this field. If commercial airlines want a supersonic plane, they should be free to get one, by any legitimate means. They should also bear the

WHO IS DAN SMOOT?

Born in Missouri, reared in Texas, Dan Smoot went to SMU getting BA and MA degrees, 1938 and 1940. In 1941, he joined the faculty at Harvard as a Teaching Fellow, doing graduate work for a doctorate in American civilization. From 1942 to 1951, he was an FBI agent: three and a half years on communist investigations; two years on FBI headquarters staff; almost four years on general FBI cases in various places. He resigned from the FBI and, from 1951 to 1955, was commentator on national radio and television programs, giving *both* sides of controversial issues. In July, 1955, he started his present profit-supported, free-enterprise business: publishing *The Dan Smoot Report,* a weekly magazine available by subscription; and producing a weekly news-analysis radio and television broadcast, available for sponsorship by reputable business firms, as an advertising vehicle. The *Report* and broadcast give *one* side of important issues: the side that presents documented truth using the American Constitution as a yardstick. If you think Smoot's materials are effective against socialism and communism, you can help immensely—help get subcribers for the *Report,* commercial sponsors for the broadcast.

You can help educate and arouse the people who elect men responsible for harmful programs of government. When enough other Americans know and care as you do, political action to restore our Republic will come.

If *The Dan Smoot Report* was instrumental in bringing you to the point of asking what *you* can do about saving the country from mushrooming big government, here is a checklist for you: Have you urged others to subscribe to the *Report?* Have you sent them reprints of a particular issue of the *Report?* Have you shown them a Dan Smoot film? Have you ever suggested a Bound Volume of *The Dan Smoot Report* for use by speakers, debaters, students, writers? Have you read and passed on to others any of the Dan Smoot books — *The Invisible Government, The Hope Of The World, America's Promise?*

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expense and responsibility. Whether they buy a foreign plane to adapt and improve, or spend their own billions on research and development, should be their business. In either event, local and state laws should prevent developers and operators of supersonic airplanes from creating nuisance or hazards for the general public.

The people of Oklahoma can take political action against every Oklahoma politician involved in (or avoiding action about) the sonic-boom testing in Oklahoma City. People in other states can demand that the national Congress withdraw all funds for supersonic transport development and force the federal government to get out of such unconstitutional activity — *if* they act before the United States becomes a satrapy of one-world government.

FOOTNOTES

(1) "SST: To Build or Not to Build," by David Hoffman, Herald Tribune Service, *The Sunday Oklahoman,* April 26, 1964, p. A 25

(2) "Problems Numerous: SST Decision Is Vital To American Aviation," by David Hoffman, Herald Tribune Service, *The Daily Oklahoman,* April 27, 1964, p. 21

(3) AP dispatch from Washington, *The Daily Oklahoman,* April 26, 1964, p. A 25

(4) "Sonic Boom Tests: What and Why Are They," *Oklahoma City Times,* March 5, 1964, pp. 10-1

(5) *U. S. News & World Report,* April 30, 1962, p. 16

(6) "Tests Like Clapping Hands Behind Baby," by Larry Levy, *Oklahoma City Times,* February 28, 1964, p. 10

(7) "You Didn't Miss A Thing," by Ed Dykus, unidentified Oklahoma City newspaper, circa March 16, 1964

(8) "City Asks FAA to Suspend Sonic Boom Test," by Bob McMillin, *Oklahoma City Times,* February 25, 1964, pp. 1, 2

(9) "Council Puts Off Sending Anti-Boom Letter to FAA," by Cullen Johnson, *The Daily Oklahoman,* February 27, 1964, pp. 1, 2

(10) "Citizens Groups Fight City Council Demand For Boom Tests Ban," by Cullen Johnson, *The Daily Oklahoman,* February 26, 1964, pp. 1, 2

(11) "Threat Made On FAA Boss," by Larry Levy and "City's Boom Flights Vital to Supersonic Plans, Halaby Says," by Jim Reid, *The Daily Oklahoman,* February 28, 1964 pp. 1, 2

(12) "Boom Damage Possibility Studied: Claims Due New Look?", *Oklahoma City Times,* April 30, 1964, pp. 1, 2

(13) "City Restraining Order Issued Against Booms," *Oklahoma City Times,* May 12, 1964, pp. 1, 2

(14) AP story from Oklahoma City, *The Dallas Morning News,* May 22, 1964, Section 1, p. 3

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